DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 527 EA 013 719

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TITLE The Organizational Structure of Public Schools.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 23p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization: *Ancillary School Services: Delivery Systems: *Differentiated Staffs: Elementary Secondary Education: *Occupational Information: Organizational Theories: Public Schools: School Districts: *School Organization

ABSTRACT

During the past decade, differentiation has taken place at an accelerating rate in all of the three major units of public schools (instruction, administration, and support services). The purpose of this study is to help administrators understand the total structure of school organization, particularly how support services complement the delivery of educational services to students. School organization and differentiation are described for schools at the elementary, middle or junior high, and high school levels. In addition, the organization and differentiation of special schools and district-wide services are described. The analysis is based on a review of descriptive personnel and organizational materials from 15 southern California school districts: observational trips to four of the districts to inspect location, size, and general physical characteristics of each of the three differentiated units; and a total of 25 interviews with school personnel representing differing levels and units. (Author/MLF)

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THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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EA 013 719

This paper has been prepared for presentation at the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, 1981.

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The Organizational Structure of Public Schools

The study of public school organizations has traditionally focused in one of two areas: teaching/instruction or administration. The support services area, comprising a vital portion of school organizations, has virtually been ignored. This study acknowledges the total organizational structure of public schools by delineating the teaching/instruction, administration and support services. However, particular emphasis is placed on the support services. The objective is to identify the critical components of this unit in order to better explain the nature of the delivery of educational services in school organizations.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected during the past year. Data were primarily collected through the inspection of records. The researcher reviewed personnel and organizational descriptive materials from 15 school districts in southern California. Observational trips were made to four of the school districts in which data were collected to inspect location, size and general physical characteristics of each of the three units identified. A total of 25 interviews were conducted: 9 with superintendents, 5 with

associate superintendents, 3 teachers, 2 principals and 6 persons in support services, a psychologist, a nurse, a secretary, a transportation director, a maintenance supervisor and a research and evaluation director. The observations and interviews were conducted in order to verify the distinctions between teaching/instruction, administration and support services. The focus throughout the study was on the support services.

The theoretical framework

Organizations tend to differentiate along several dimensiosn, spatially, occupationally, hierarchically and functionally (Blau, 1973:256). In the present study the intent is to show how functional differentiation occurs in public school organizations. Three major functions are identified: teaching/instruction, administration/management and support services.

The basic assumption in delineating the three major functions specified above is to note the differences between them and the consequences in the delivery of educational services. Blau states that "people differ in status and social affiliation, that they occupy different positions and ranks, and that they belong to different groups and subunits of various sorts" (256).

Two major activities are performed in public school organizations: instruction and administration. Two units have subsequently developed to handle these activities. During the past three decades another unit has increased in importance. This unit has usually been referred to as support services. The unit is designed to aid in instruction and administration. This unit has increased dramatically during the past decade where it remains separate and the second largest unit in most school organizations. (This is

based on data collected for the present study).

The term differentiation refers specifically to the number of structural components that are formally distinguished in terms of any one criterion. The empirical measures used are such things as the number of branches, number of occupational positions (division of labor), number of hierarchical levels, number of divisions, and number of sections within branches of divisions (Blau, 1973:258).

The present study is limited to very broad identifications of the structural components in school organizations. The first delineation is in terms of specifying instruction, administration and support services. Because the literature is fairly well developed concerning instruction and administration (See Waller, 1932; Lortie, 1975; Charters, 1965; Wolcott, 1973; 1977; Ortiz, 1978; Ortiz, 1981 and others.) those two areas are de-emphasized in the present report.

The second delineation is in terms of the components within support services. Several ways can be employed. For example, support services may be designed to aid the instructional or administrative unit. Each of these units may be further broken into professional services or non-professional services. Within the professional non-professional portions, the units may be further divided to specify division of labor such as psychologists vs. counselors vs. attendance officers vs. secretarial vs. clerical aid. Within each of the latter division an hierarchical structure may also be imposed in which we find senior above junior psychologists, secretary I above secretary II, and general clerk I above the file clerk. This structure is illustrated

in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Supporting Instruction	
Professional	Non-professional
Psychologist I (senior)	Attendance officer*
Psychologist II (Junior)	Secretary I
Counselor	Secretary II
	Clerk I (General)
	File clerk

*This officer may also support administration such as in reporting ADA data.

Organizational Structure of Support Services

Blau found that increasing size generates structural differentiation in organizations along various dimensions at decelerating rates. In public schools we find secondary schools larger than elementary schools and with correspondingly greater differentiation. This differentiation results in more personnel and in the demand for administrative direction and coordination. Therefore, the larger an organization is, the larger the average size of its structural components of all kinds. However, the proportionate size of the average structural component as distinguished from its absolute size decreases with increases in organizational size (Blau, 1973:262).

As stated above, differentiation intensifies administrative problems. The administrative problems are coordination and communication. These two demands arise as functions increase and as hierarchical structures are created.

For example, in schools as the size increases so does the complexity of differentiation at each level. A medium sized school district may perform its functions adequately with two psychologists and the associated components described above. As the size increases, the attendant components multiply, so that differentiation continues throughout the unit. It is this characteristic about organizations which raises implications for the school administrator.

In public school organizations, differentiation has taken place in all of the three major functions at an alarming rate during the past decade. Instruction has been differentiated within the teaching ranks, as well as in the creation of many specialized roles such as math specialists, resource teachers and special education teachers. Administration has differentiated in its creation of site administrative roles such as program specialists, and supervisors, various vice-principalships, deans of students, and assistants to the principals, and central office administrative roles such as directorships, administrators and managers of the various units and numerous assistant, associate area, and deputy superintendencies.

The least understood differentiation which has taken place is in the support services. In fact, distinguishing support services from instruction and administration is an attempt to differentiate. The important thing for administrators is that they are responsible for all three functional units as they mange the schools. School administrators are usually well trained in instruction and administration. They are less familiar with the growing support services. Therefore, an understanding of this unit is important.

Beyond the consideration for each of the units, what does this mean in the delivery of educational services to students? An analysis of the manner

by which public schools are organized and how support services fit in will show the prominance support services hold in these institutions.

Two major problems confront administrators as this differentiation accelerates. Personnel problems in dealing with hiring, evaluation, and retaining or releasing are minor in contrast to developing an explanatory identity for this increasing body. Do the members of each differentiating unit aid teachers in the delivery of educational services? Do they indicate a preoccupation in increasing administrative overhead? The second problem associated with the first is the coordination of all of the various individuals within the different groups.

School site organization and differentiation

Elementary

The elementary principal is the administrator and manager of the school. The qualifications for the position are teaching experience and an administrative credential. Unless the school's enrollment is increasing or the school's enrollement approaches 1000 students, the principal is likely to be the sole administrator. In those cases where the school is larger, a vice-principal may aid in the running of the school. This practice is decreasing in most southern California schools. The practice most common is to assign teachers part-time administrative duties.

Other administrative posts which may be located at the elementary school site are the specialist and supervisor. In those cases where the administrative credential is required the post is defined as administrative. Not all specialists and supervisors are, however, credentialed as

administrators. In such instances, the post is viewed as a teaching one. Those schools participating in special projects, categorical programs and other special funded programs are likely to have at least one program specialist possessing an administrative credential. The distinction between these persons and the principal is that they perform staff rather than line functions.

Teachers form the second type of structure in public schools. Normally, this consists of the largest number of persons. Teachers are qualified for their posts by the teaching credential. Most teachers in elementary schools are regular classroom teachers. However, there is a growing body of special teachers. These persons are engaged in special types of instruction such as bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), special education, or physical education. These persons may be full or part-time teachers based at the particular school. Additionally, there may also be resource teachers. These latter types may be classified as specialists without administrative credentials.

The support services designed to aid instruction include aides. Schools which participate in special programs such as special education, categorical programs, etc. are likely to employ instructional or teacher aides. These persons' work days vary from 4-6 hours. The aide's responsibilities are usually designed to provide special help to students in the particular programs. Some aides help the teacher with the extensive clerical work associated with the special programs. Aides are usually hired after being screened to determine their particular skills related to the type of student with whom they will work. The important feature of this post is that it

does provide direct contact with students, teachers, and instruction. Therefore, the support service is directed at the mission of the organization. Other types of aides which are based at elementary schools include community, health, and related services aides. This position is also non-professional The post does not normally carry contract commitments. The assignment is contingent on immediate need and the funding is based on the special programs.

Another post which is not as clearly defined throughout the school districts is that of noon playground supervisor. This post may be held by a regular teacher who is trained in athletics and children's sports and is willing to assume an extra duty during the noon hour. In that case, the post is clearly that of a teacher. In other instances, community persons may come into the school to participate in noon playground activities without special credentials.

The rest of the services provided in schools are designed for both instruction and administration or administration. The most visible and in many cases, highly influential is the school secretary. This person is highly trained in secretarial, interpersonal and clerical skills. Additionally, the acquisition of the post requires prior experience in similar settings. The secretary is, therefore, primarily responsible for the interpersonal requirements of the position. Also, the secretary serves to aide the principal first and foremost. She is also responsible for the smooth running of the rest of the office. The teachers, students, parents and others must confront this person before all others when entering the elementary school. The secretary in a regular 600-800 enrollment school tends to have at least two clerk typists to help her with the clerical work.

The clerk typists handle the routine typing, filing, and general office work. Additional clerks may be present in some schools, particularly in those schools with extensive special programs.

Other support services include cafeteria or food services. Usually, this unit is organized around a kitchen leadperson with several assistants. The larger schools may have very elaborate systems. Such systems may include additional features such as breakfasts and snacks. In this case, the kitchen unit may assume increasing importance in the dunctioning of the school.

The other support service which is indespensible to an elementary school is the custodial service. This unit may be based at the central office with custodians assigned to the various schools throughout the district. Most elementary schools have two custodians responsible for the upkeep of the building. One of the custodians is usually designated as the head. In some cases, these custodians are also responsible for the regular maintenance of the grounds as well, with special help coming from the central office gardener and groundsmen unit when necessary.

Another service which is provided to elementary schools is transportation. The personnel involved normally include bus drivers, repair men and traffic guards. The unit is usually administered from the central office with particular bus drivers and traffic guards assigned to the schools. In some cases, buses and drivers are contracted from outside the district. Then, the district's support staff coordinate the transportation needs.

The typical organizational arrangement in elementary schools is to have principals act as the immediate evaluators of all of the personnel involved

in the support services with the ultimate evaluation based at the head of the particular service area.

Support services may be distinguished as professional or non-professional. For elementary schools, the professional services normally are those which maintain contact with students, teachers, principals and instruction. The non-professional services are those which deal with plant and ground maintenance, food production, clerical services and transportation services.

The principal is normally responsible for coordinating all of these services at his/her particular school. Also, the principal is usually responsible for evaluating those persons assigned to his/her school.

Middle or junior high school organization and differentiation

The complexity of the structure of the organization of public schools increases as we move from the elementary to the secondary level. This complexity increases in several ways. First, the size is increased. For example, the mid-high or junior high schools normally have vice-principals as part of administration. Sometimes these persons are called deans of students. Also, usually the number of teachers is larger. Additionally, a separate group, the counselors, is added to this level. It is not uncommon to find at least two persons filling this post in middle schools.

There are two types of counselors: those who are former teachers who acquire a counseling credential and engage in testing activities and counseling of college-bound students and those persons who are hired to counsel particular types of students. These persons may acquire their positions because they're members of the particular target group. These individuals guide and counsel these particular students.

Another post which is added is that of librarian. These persons may or may not be former teachers. They are professionals who supervise the library. They may teach library skills and be responsible for the schools' acquisition of the necessary books and instructional materials. There is great variation in the way this role is actualized.

Additionally, special teachers are augmented at this level. Also, resource teachers are more numerous at this type of school.

Whereas, instructional or teaching aides are not as extensive among classroom teachers, the special teachers and resource teachers may have aides to help them in their work. These persons usually deliver instructional and clerical services to students and teachers. They may also provide programmatic services in the special projects.

Within the structure of the mid-high school, another post which is common is that of the attendance clerk. This person is responsible for monitoring the absences of students. Another post created at this level is that of the health clerk. This person is responsible for evaluating the health needs of students. Record-keeping as well as attendance of ill students are normal activities of this person.

Middle high schools usually have two secretaries, although one is usually assigned the senior post. The duties of these persons are usually interpersonal in nature. The senior secretary is normally most concerned with the principal and his responsibilities, while the second secretary attends to the vice-principal. Clerk typists are likewise assigned to this unit to take care of the routine filing and clerical work. Special clerks may be hired who are associated with the particular special programs.

Because the plant maintenance program is more extensive at this level, a plant supervisor is usually assigned to this particular type of school. This person is responsible for custodians, gardener, and night patrol service.

When the school has special programs such as for the handicapped, special personnel may be hired to be housed at these sites for immediate aide, although some of them may be available for the entire district if need arises. An example of this is the school nurse. Nurses are normally based at those schools they are most likely to be needed, but their schedule permits them to provide services to a number of nearby schools.

On occasion, middle high schools may have specialists assigned to them. For example, if they have extensive special programs they may have resource teachers or program specialists assigned to coordinate the various programs among the teachers. In these instances, administrative credentials may be required which place these persons in an administrative capacity. Sometimes when the school is a target site for a particular program it may house persons such as project managers. These persons are program administrators credentialed as administrators, working alongside the principal, except that the post is distinct in its staff characteristics. The person concentrates on the management of the program, instruction, children and advising teachers. This is contrasted with the principal who concentrates on administering a school plant and managing the adults within that plant.

High school organization and differentiation

High schools are more complex in their structure. Although the structure varies, there are four basic areas which constitute the general organization.

The principal and usually three or four assistants make up the

administrative unit. This unit may be modified by the addition of specialists and supervisors, but normally, those supervisors and specialists assigned to high schools are based at the central office and the relationship between them and the principal is clearly defined as staff and line (See Briner and Iannaccone, 1966). The interaction between these persons and the schools is concentrated among discipline chairs.

Normally, the principal is flanked by two vice-principals, one concerned with curriculum/instruction and the other with discipline. Alongside these vice-principals, deans of students and guidance aid in the smooth functioning of the two primary concerns in high schools, instruction and student control. Sometimes these latter two posts are combined under one person.

To understand the structure more thoroughly, each vice-principal's primary responsibilities will be presented along with the various groups comprising that unit. The vice-principal for instruction or curriculum is mostly concerned with teachers. The traditional discipline and special teachers are included. Each high school varies with its particular emphasis, but by inspecting the various areas represented a fairly good picture regarding the nature of the curriculum at that school can be captured. Such specialties which vary according to need or school peculiarities are: adaptive psysical education, ESL, vocational/agricultural and special education. Associated with these specialties, teachers as well as support personnel have to be engaged. For example, teacher aides, machine operators, vocational/agricultural gardeners and others provide additional services to the teacher in specific areas. Library services are also included in this unit. Another curricular offering which may alter the structure of the

personnel is an ROTC program. Personnel responsible for this program are included as interest among students is expressed and the district can afford it.

A secretary is part of the support services for this unit. Clerical help is usually associated as well.

In contrast to the organizational unit of curriculum and instruction, is the unit which places emphasis upon students' attendance and working. The vice-principal in charge of this unit has usually been a former teacher and possesses an administrative credential. The critical aspect is the type of student with whom this person interacts. These students are usually hard-to-teach. A main concern is attendance. Under this unit there are usually two attendance clerks with a secretary coordinating them and the administrator. Also, there is a person who serves as a school supervisor in youth employment. This person's responsiblities are to place these students in part-time positions. This person may also hire work-study students within the campus and coordinate their efforts. As presented above the entire unit is a support service unit designed to deal with particular types of students and with the hiring of students in the work-study program.

A somewhat similar unit is that of dean of guidance. This is an administrative post. The dean usually has a number of counselors directly responsible to him/her. Three or four conselors are common. The counselors are usually former teachers who have obtained special training in counseling students. This unit deals with testing, post-secondary school advisement, and career counseling. A coordinator for work assignment may be attached to this unit. Additionally, it is common to find two secretaries, with one

of them serving as senior secretary. To assist them, there are usually a couple of clerks assigned to them as well. Health services to students are also generally provided by this unit. A health clerk is normally included.

The other vice-principal of a high school is usually in charge of discipline. This post places the person as responsible for all disciplinary actions and enforcement of procedures and regulations.

To assist in carrying out the general functions associated with student control, the vice-principal has two directors. One director is in charge of student activities. This covers the regular extra-curricular functions. The second director is in charge of athletics. This usually means all of the competitive sports in which the school engages. A secretary is assigned to this unit. A bookkeeper is also assigned to insure that budgetary procedures are adhered to and properly accounted. Campus aides are assigned to help in the various activities which arise associated with the student activities and athletics. A parking lot attendant is also a common post provided to this unit.

As can be seen, the functions of the high school are fairly well laid out in terms of the support services personnel which are provided. A striking observation is that the professional posts necessary to each unit are small in contrast to the auxiliary personnel which are included. Also, the primary functions of instruction and student control are accentuated.

Each school site must also provide for its own maintenance. At the high school level this unit is headed by the plant supervisor. He is responsible for coordinating both plant and grounds maintenance. A normal unit consists of about 8 or 9 custodians, several gardeners, some assigned

to the regular school grounds, while the others are assigned to care for the special athletic fields, such as the football field and golf course. Additionally, someone is assigned to the pools as appropriate to the particular school. Another post associated with this unit is the night lead person or safety officer.

Five separate units have been located in the structure of high schools for which principals are responsible. The mix of administrative, teaching and support services is instructive. Four school certificated administrative posts tend to be a normal load with one classified administrative post.

The largest group consists of teachers. Not to be discounted, however, is the second largest group consisting of the various support services. These support services range from sophisticated professionals and technicians to less sophisticated posts such as custodians and parking lot attendants. The point to be made is that the organization functions to the degree to which all of these groups can be coordinated.

In summary, the principal, as an administrator, faces several types of workers: professionals, non-professionals, technicians, bureaucrats, skilled, laborers, and others.

Special schools organization and differentiation

School districts tend to have special schools designed to handle certain types of students. In southern California one of the most common types is the continuation school. This school is intended for the hard-to-teach students, primarily those with attendance and behavioral difficulties. The school is administered by a principal and dean of students. Teachers make up the instructional unit. The support services consist of secretarial,

attendance, aides, and custodial units. Two secretaries and an administrative assistant head the secretarial services. Below them several clerks aid in the routine office work. The instructional aides help the teachers in various capacities including clerical services. The custodial services are usually handled by two persons.

Another type of special school is the adult education school. This school is designed to provide special education for adults. The principal heads the school with aid from a vice-principal. Teachers and counselors make up the instructional unit. Instructional aides may also be part of this unit. The secretarial pool consists of several secretaries and their clerks. A bookkeeper may also serve to handle the special funds available for this type of education.

Within this school, instruction may be bifurcated to include regular basic education of immigrants and those who desire to obtain the high school equivalency diploma and special skills programs financed by special federal and state funds such as CETA posts, for example. Teachers and aides are, then, separately assigned to the two different programs. Clerical aid is also provided to each and it may be necessary to have a coordinator to handle the special funds programs.

District-wide support services organization and differentiation

So far, school site support services have been identified and described. At the district site assistant and associate superintendents are assigned to head and coordinate all support services, those based at the sites and those which originate at the central office. In a medium sized school district with an enrollment of about 20,000 these services may fall under four major

areas: business, administrative, educational and personnel services.

Each area will be presented to indicate the complexity. Under business services, accounting, purchasing, planning and construction, warehousing, payroll, maintenance and operations, food services, transportation, attendance, grounds, security and insurance are all combined under an associate or assistant superintendent. As can be seen from the list, the items which are included are those which require substantial financing and budgeting considerations.

Under the area of administrative services, research and evaluation, pupil services, occupational education, data processing and legislation are covered. These areas include all of the testing and student accountability programs as well as the legal aspects and informational control.

Under the educational services, instructional services, duplication, programs for the gifted, fine arts, media centers, special education, special projects, bilingual programs, curriculum development and driver training are placed.

Under the personnel services, personnel services, Title IX, Employee safety, CETA programs, student teachers, professional growth, credentialing, employer-employee relations, staff development and affirmative action are placed.

In summary, it can be seen that the variety and complexity of services which are present in public school organizations do present substantial coordination and communication problems to administrators.

Conclusions

Administrators of public school organizations must consider three separate functional areas as they manage their institutions. The largest group is the

teaching/instructional group, the second largest group is the support services and finally the smallest and the group of which they're a part of is administration. The group which requires coordination to a greater extent is the support services. Because the support services may be attached to either instruction or administration or both, coordination is an ever present concern.

In the attempt to coordinate the efforts of support services staff, administrators may be diverted to issues unrelated to the central mission of the school organization, namely instruction.

While this study does not show how administrators go about coordinating the three functional areas, this study does show that support services are complex, varied and increasing. The implications in the delivery of educational services is that teachers may be neglected by administrators. Teaching and instruction may be viewed as a function which can take care of itself as administrators become preoccupied with support services.

A related issue is that the orientations of support services staff as contrasted to the teaching staff are different. Support services do not provide for careers. The posts are not necessarily permanent. Therefore, it can be speculated that it is possible that organizational commitment and loyalty would differ between the two groups. Moreover, dedication to the overall mission of the school organization may differ as well. This study does not address these issues. It does however, raise questions regarding the linkage between the support services and teaching/instruction.

As the internal structure of school organizations is analyzed, two primary concerns emerge: instruction and control of students. To the extent

that support services are designed to aid one or the other, the character of the delivery of educational services can be evaluated.

More immediate to this study, are implications regarding the conduct of administrators as they coordinate the functional areas designated. The purpose of this study was to highlight the importance of understanding the total structure of school organizations. More specifically, it is hoped that support services be an area of scientific inquiry in order to understand the delivery of educational services to students.

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